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Back-Seat Driver: With gas at \$4 a gallon, trains fill up

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Gov. Schwarzenegger showed up last year on light rail downtown for a brief ride.

Just checking it out, he said, after riding a night train with few passengers.

If the governor rode now, during commute hours, he'd be in a crowd.

With a gallon of gas at nearly \$4, transit agencies report record ridership. Sometimes there's standing room only.

In 12 days, the state Department of Transportation will begin a series of closures on Interstate 5 downtown for repairs, certain to cause congestion and test mass transit.

Friday – two days after he proposed another budget that transit officials say underfunds them – the governor suggested Sacramentans hop a bus or train during the I-5 closures, or telecommute and work flextime.

To its credit, Caltrans has agreed to funnel up to \$500,000 in urgency cash to area transit agencies during the closures.

Transit officials have fingers crossed. Commuters, however, should be proactive.

Here's a quick transit guide:

Sacramento Regional Transit

The agency will add three trains each on the Folsom and Meadowview light-rail lines. They'll also position 10 extra buses around the county.

First trains out of Folsom could fill up. Three parking lots on that line already fill up each day, while the Hazel lot usually has available spaces. Check <http://www.sacrt.com/>.

Placer Commuter Express

This agency was the canary in the mine shaft: Some buses began to fill up months ago. Caltrans funneled money to Placer, adding a fourth bus to the agency's small freeway fleet.

That doesn't sound like much, but it probably will mean 40 to 50 fewer cars on the freeway every day.

Call (530) 885-BUSS or (916) 784-6177.

Capitol Corridor trains

This Bay Area-to-foothills rail service reports record ridership, but officials say commute-time trains still have plenty of seats available. And, if necessary, they'll allow standees.

A 10-ride pass from Davis to downtown Sacramento costs \$42. From Auburn, it's \$60. Web site: <http://www.capitolcorridor.org/>.

Yolo Transit

Yolo will have several extra peak-hour trips from Woodland and Davis into Sacramento. The agency also will sell Capitol Corridor train tickets at a discount to people who haven't ridden before.

For information, call (530) 661-0816 or check <http://www.yctd.org/>.

El Dorado Transit

Ridership is up, but seats are available mornings on 10 of 12 express buses into downtown Sacramento. The two full buses are the 5:20 a.m. out of Placerville and the 6:15 a.m. bus that starts in El Dorado Hills.

The El Dorado Hills park-and-ride lot also fills up daily, but parking is available at the Ponderosa parking lot in Shingle Springs, and the lot at the El Dorado County Fairgrounds in Placerville has spaces.

Call (530) 642-5383 or check <http://www.eldoradotransit.com/>.

e-tran

Elk Grove officials will add two commute buses on each of its I-5 and Highway 99 runs. Earlier morning trips have more vacancies. Later trips sometimes fill up. Call (916) 687-3030 or check <http://www.e-tran.org/>.

North Natomas TMA

This little agency will boost its Natomas Flyer shuttle service into downtown. Call (916) 552-0313 or check <http://www.northnatomastma.org/>.

Yuba-Sutter Transit

The agency will increase express service. Call (530) 634-6880 or check <http://www.yubasuttertransit.com/>.

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